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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2018
TAGS: [GR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AL](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE AND ALBANIA AGREE ON MILITARY CEMETERIES IN
ALBANIA

REF: TIRAN 745

Classified By: A/POL COUNSELOR JEFF HOVNIER. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) On November 21, the Greek Foreign Ministry announced that Greece and Albania had reached agreement on the establishment of two military cemeteries in Albania (reftel). The two cemeteries, which will honor Greek soldiers killed in Albania in WWII, will be located in Gjirokaster and Kelcyre. The Greeks originally wanted four cemeteries but after years of talks and negotiations an apparent compromise on two cemeteries was reached. On November 25, MFA Albania Desk Officer, Despina Koukouloupoulou, told us that Tirana had committed to seek to complete all necessary internal procedures so that the formal agreement could be signed at the end of this year.

¶2. (C) Comment: The cemetery issue has been an major obstacle to improved Greek-Albanian bilateral relations. Although the Greeks have never drawn any explicit linkages between the issue and Greek ratification of Albania's Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) (per reftel, Greece is one of three remaining EU states who have not ratified the SAA), our MFA contacts have suggested that Parliamentary consideration of the SAA will be "facilitated" by completion of the negotiations on the military cemeteries. We understand that the Albanian SAA is pending in Parliament, and we will continue to encourage rapid ratification. End Comment.
SPECKHARD